



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

November 2, 2005

## **MORE THAN 100 ARRESTED IN ICE OPERATION TARGETING ILLEGAL WORKERS AT LOCAL BONDED WAREHOUSES**

SEATTLE – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents served a federal civil warrant of inspection today at bonded warehouses operated by Regal Logistics Corporation in Fife, Washington and arrested 105 foreign nationals who were believed to be working in the United States without authorization. Regal Logistics provides storage space for customs “in-bond” merchandise entering the United States from abroad.

The workers were identified after ICE agents audited the recent hiring records of Phoenix Staffing, LLC., and found discrepancies leading agents to believe that a number of the company’s employees may not have been authorized to work in the United States. Phoenix Staffing is a temporary employment agency used by Regal Logistics. ICE agents say it appears that many of the illegal workers used counterfeit identity documents to obtain their jobs. The majority of the unauthorized employees are from Mexico.

Today’s operation is part of ICE’s worksite enforcement efforts focusing on businesses with ties to security sensitive sites and critical infrastructure facilities -- including airports, military bases, customs “in-bond” warehouses, and bio-agriculture industries. Unauthorized workers with access to such sites are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists, smugglers, traffickers, or other criminals. Regal Logistic’s bonded facilities are located close to the area’s major seaports, rail yards, and international airports.

“Addressing security vulnerabilities that pose a potential threat to our nation's vital infrastructure is a crucial part of ICE's enforcement strategy,” said Leigh Winchell, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Seattle. “When someone uses fraud or false documents to gain access to a major cargo hub like the Seattle-Tacoma area, we have no way of knowing who they really are or what their motives might be.”

ICE agents are reviewing the backgrounds of each of the workers arrested today to determine how their cases should be handled. It is expected that the vast majority will be removed from the United States after facing administrative charges for violating immigration laws.

To aid employers, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services operates the Basic Pilot Program, a Web-based system that enables businesses to verify the employment eligibility of newly hired workers. Nationwide, there are more than 20,000 hiring sites using the Basic Pilot Program. Interested employers are urged to call the agency’s toll-free number [888-464-4218] to obtain more information about the program.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*